

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1. (Currently Amended) A method of stuffing natural casings with sausage emulsion, comprising, preloading each of the casings on an elongated hollow open ended sleeve shorter than the casings with the sleeve having a first end and an open end which is of constant uninterrupted diameter between the first end and the open end and having diameter less than the casings by telescoping the casing on the outer surface of the sleeve, and extending an open end of the casing toward the open end of the sleeve, slidably mounting the sleeve over an open end of a meat stuffing tube of a sausage encasing machine, extruding meat emulsion through the stuffing tube into the casing mounted on the sleeve until the casing is slidably removed from the tube caused in part by the movement of meat emulsion entering the casing, repeating the use of the sleeve by preloading the sleeve with another natural casing, and sequentially filling the casing on the preloaded sleeve with meat emulsion in accordance with the foregoing steps, and wherein the stuffing tube is moved longitudinally to a twisting and linking station when a pre-loaded sleeve is mounted thereon, a brake element is moved into operative contact with the sleeve, the brake element selectively holding the sleeve against longitudinal movement while permitting the

sleeve to all from supporting condition on the stuffing
tube.

Claim 2. (Canceled)

Claim 3. (Currently Amended) The machine of claim 28 wherein a radial flange is on the sleeve at an end opposite its open discharge opening.

Claim 4. (Original) The machine of claim 3 wherein the stuffing tube has a stop element on its outer surface to engage the flange to limit the sliding action of the sleeve on the stuffing tube in one direction.

Claim 5. (Original) The machine of claim 4 wherein the stop element is positioned so that when it engages the flange the discharge openings of the sleeve and the stuffing tube register with each other.

Claim 6. (Canceled)

Claim 7. (Original) A natural casing sausage making machine having a frame, a meat emulsion pump, and a hollow stuffing tube with an open discharge end for discharging meat emulsion from the pump, comprising,
a hollow open ended elongated sleeve slidably mounted on the stuffing tube and having an open discharge end registering with the discharge end of the stuffing tube,
the sleeve being preloaded with a natural casing having a diameter and length greater than that of the sleeve, the

casing being in telescopic condition on the outer surface of the sleeve,
a radially extending flange adjacent one end of the sleeve to prevent the casing from sliding off that end of the sleeve,
a stop element on the outer surface of the stuffing tube to engage the flange to limit the sliding action of the sleeve on the stuffing tube in one direction,
the stop element being positioned so that when it engages the flange the discharge opening of the sleeve and the stuffing tube register with each other,
a detent element interconnecting the sleeve with the stuffing tube to releasably connect the sleeve to the stuffing tube, the detent element being comprised of an annular groove extending around the outer surface of the stuffing tube with a detent element on the inner diameter of the sleeve to permit the detent element to releasably be inserted in to the annular groove, and
an elongated slot on the sleeve and extending length of the sleeve to permit its diameter to be resiliently changed to facilitate the placement of the sleeve on the stuffing tube to accommodate the detent until the detent is located within the annular groove.

Claim 8. (Original) A natural casing sausage making machine having a frame, a meat emulsion pump, and a hollow stuffing tube with an open discharge end for discharging meat emulsion from the pump, comprising,
a hollow open ended elongated sleeve slidably mounted on the stuffing tube and having an open discharge end registering with the discharge end of the stuffing tube,

the sleeve being preloaded with a natural casing having a diameter and length greater than that of the sleeve, the casing being in telescopic condition on the outer surface of the sleeve,

a radially extending flange adjacent one end of the sleeve to prevent the casing from sliding off that end of the sleeve, and

a brake element pivotally mounted on the machine and positioned to contact the sleeve to selectively hold the sleeve against longitudinal movement, and means on the machine for withdrawing the stuffing tube from the sleeve after the casing on the sleeve has been removed from the stuffing tube and filled with meat emulsion.

Claim 9. (New) A natural casing stuffing sausage making machine having a frame, a meat emulsion pump, and a hollow stuffing tube with an open discharge end for discharging meat emulsion from the pump, comprising,

a hollow open ended elongated sleeve slidably mounted on the stuffing tube and having an open discharge end registering with the discharge end of the stuffing tube,

the sleeve being preloaded with a natural casing having a diameter and length greater than that of the sleeve, the casing being in telescopic condition on the outer surface of the sleeve,

a radially extending flange adjacent one end of the sleeve to prevent the casing from sliding off that end of the sleeve, wherein the radially extending flange is on the sleeve at an end opposite its open discharge opening,

a stop element on the outer surface of the stuffing tube to
engage the flange to limit the sliding action of the sleeve
on the stuffing tube in one direction,
the stop element being positioned so that when it engages the
flange the discharging openings of the sleeve and the
stuffing tube register with each other,
a detent element interconnecting the sleeve with the stuffing
tube to releasably connect the sleeve to the stuffing tube,
and
the detent element being comprised of an annular groove
extending around the outer surface of the stuffing tube
with a detent element on the inner diameter of the sleeve
to permit the detent element to releasably be inserted into
the annular groove.

Status of Claims:

Claims 1-8 are pending. Claims 2 and 6 have been canceled. Claims 1 and 3 have been amended. Claim 9 has been added.

The amendments are fully supported by the original disclosure, and no new matter has been introduced. Specifically, the amendment to claim 1 merely incorporates canceled dependent claim 6. Claim 3 has been amended to change its dependency. Lastly, new claim 9 is based on portions of claim 7.